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1 – EPA raises environmental justice, emissions concerns with Corpus Christi LNG project, Energy Wire, 11/19/2014

<http://www.eenews.net/energywire/2014/11/19/stories/1060009169>

Federal regulators last month gave the thumbs-up to a new liquefied natural gas export terminal proposed for construction in Corpus Christi, Texas, but the regional U.S. EPA office this week noted its continued concerns about the project, aligning itself with environmentalists who argue that natural gas exports should be weighed in light of their full life-cycle carbon footprint.

2 – Texas plant where workers died has long history of violations, Greenwire, 11/18/14

<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2014/11/18/stories/1060009133>

Federal officials held their first meetings with DuPont Co. representatives yesterday as they work to piece together the cause of a chemical leak at the company's La Porte, Texas, plant that killed four workers Saturday.

3 – Federal regulator warns reversing pipeline flow to handle new oil, gas could result in spill, website reports, Times Picayune, 11/18/2014

http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2014/11/federal_pipeline_regulator_war.html#incart_river

Even as the U.S. Senate considers a vote on building the controversial Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada to the U.S., the federal agency that regulates pipelines is warning that a new money-saving trend of reversing the flow of oil and natural gas in existing pipelines or changing the product they carry could threaten the pipelines' safety, according to InsideClimate News.

4 – Senate Defeats Bill on Keystone XL Pipeline in Narrow Vote, NY Times, 11/18/14

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/19/us/politics/keystone-xl-pipeline.html>

Senate Democrats, by a single vote, stopped legislation that would have approved construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, one of the most fractious and expensive battles of the Obama presidency.

5 – Gila contract improper, diversion opponent says, Albuquerque Journal, 11/19/2014

<http://www.abqjournal.com/498280/news/gila-contract-improper-diversion-opponent-says.html>

The staff of the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission signed a \$500,000 engineering contract for work on a proposed Gila River water diversion project without getting approval in a public meeting, according to documents made public in an open meetings lawsuit. Craig Roepke, a staff member working on the controversial Gila project, signed the contract with Albuquerque engineering firm Bohannon Huston Inc. on May 2, 2012, according to documents provided by the state to attorneys for project opponent Norm Gaume.

6 – Mapping DuPont's Deadly Chemical Leak, Center for Effective Government, 11/18/2014

<http://www.foreffectivegov.org/node/13282>

On Saturday, Nov. 15, a toxic chemical leak at a DuPont manufacturing plant outside of Houston killed four workers and hospitalized another, serving as another troubling example of the need for stronger chemical safety standards. The chemical involved in the leak, methyl mercaptan, can cause eye and lung irritation and can be fatal at high levels. Numerous other U.S. facilities use and store this chemical, including those featured in a new interactive map by the Center for Effective Government.

7 – Texas Grid Operator Says Clean Energy Plan Could Raise Bills and Lead to Blackouts, NPR, 11/18/2014

<http://stateimpact.npr.org/texas/2014/11/18/texas-grid-operator-says-clean-energy-plan-could-raise-bills-and-lead-to-blackouts/>

The clean energy plan put forth by the Environmental Protection Agency aims to combat climate change by reducing the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by power plants. But it may come at a price, according to a report released Monday by the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, the group that manages much of Texas electric grid.

8 – Residents talk lake's future in Calhoun County, Victoria Advocate, 11/18/2014

<http://www.victoriaadvocate.com/news/2014/nov/18/residents-talk-lakes-future-in-calhoun-county/>

Calhoun County residents were given the opportunity to voice their say in how Green Lake will be used at public meetings held Monday and Tuesday nights. The county purchased the 6,400-acre Green Lake property with two grants totaling \$3.5 million from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in December 2012.

9 - System cleaning byproducts found in Calhoun County water, Victoria Advocate, 11/14/2014

<http://www.victoriaadvocate.com/news/2014/nov/14/system-cleaning-byproducts-found-in-calhoun-county/>

The state environmental agency found an excess of cleaning byproducts in Port O'Connor and Port Lavaca drinking water supplied by Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority. The state environmental agency's water sample was taken shortly after a one-month period when the river authority alternated its disinfection method, according to a letter to GBRA customers.

10 – White House clears EPA rewrite of hazardous waste rule, The Hill, 11/18/2014

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/224538-white-house-clears-epa-rewrite-of-hazardous-waste-rule>

The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has approved a regulation that seeks to strengthen federal standards for recycling hazardous waste. The rule to change the definition of solid waste under the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) standards would partially roll back a 2008 rule from the final months of the Bush administration.

11- Farmington officials say city power plants not violating Clean Water Act, Abq Journal, 11/18/2014

<http://www.abqjournal.com/497842/news/farmington-officials-say-city-power-plants-not-violating-clean-water-act.html>

Environmental Protection Agency officials have not yet said whether two Farmington power plants are violating federal laws. Although the plants are listed on an agency database as not being in compliance, city officials say the listings are wrong. "We're convinced, beyond the shadow of a doubt, it's an error on the EPA's database," said Michael Sims, Farmington Electric Utility System director.

12- ERCOT wants 'safety valve' in EPA plan, Star-telegram, 11/18/2014

<http://www.star-telegram.com/2014/11/18/6299242/ercot-wants-safety-valve-in-epa.html?rh=1>

Top Texas officials have already decried the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed Clean Power Plan rules aimed at reducing carbon dioxide emissions from power plants, so it's no surprise that the state's main power grid operator has chimed in. A report Monday from the Electric Reliability Council of Texas showed a bunch of alarming negatives, including a prediction that the plan would cause power costs for consumers to increase 20 percent or more by 2020.

7. GAS EXPORTS:

EPA raises environmental justice, emissions concerns with Corpus Christi LNG project

Jenny Mandel, E&E reporter

Published: Wednesday, November 19, 2014

Federal regulators last month gave the thumbs-up to a new liquefied natural gas export terminal proposed for construction in Corpus Christi, Texas, but the regional U.S. EPA office this week noted its continued concerns about the project, aligning itself with environmentalists who argue that natural gas exports should be weighed in light of their full life-cycle carbon footprint.

In a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Craig Weeks, the chief of planning and coordination for EPA's Dallas office, said issues the agency raised earlier in the FERC environmental review were not adequately addressed in the project's final environmental impact statement.

"EPA continues to have concerns for environmental justice impacts, greenhouse gases and indirect effects" associated with Cheniere Energy Inc.'s Corpus Christi LNG project, the agency said in a comment on the final EIS.

That assessment, issued last month, concluded that the export project would not have "significant" adverse environmental effects as long as a series of minor changes were made to the company's implementation plan ([EnergyWire](#), Oct. 9).

But EPA said FERC's review did not adequately address concerns it raised in response to an earlier draft.

With respect to environmental justice issues, EPA said that a length of new pipeline would cross through an area where its impact would be disproportionately felt by "minority or low income communities."

FERC said in the final EIS that because the pipeline construction process is short-lived, the pipeline would have no lasting effects on that community, but in its new filing, EPA argues that maintenance and emergency scenarios could have longer-lived consequences.

EPA also pointed to two environmental issues that it said FERC did not adequately address in the finalized review. First, it said, the project would bring "indirect effects" from increased production of natural gas, including impacts on air and water quality.

Second, the regional office said FERC should disclose the greenhouse gas emissions "associated with the production, transport and combustion of the natural gas proposed to be exported by the project."

The comments pointed to two documents published by the Energy Department in May to assess the life-cycle climate effects of natural gas exports and upstream impacts of drilling activities ([Greenwire](#), June 10).

DOE has said it would use those documents in making its own determination of the public interest in allowing exports to go forward, as required under the Natural Gas Act, but it has not said how the reports would be factored into its decisions.

FERC previously has said indirect and upstream impacts of LNG exports are impossible to predict and outside the scope of its review. Chairwoman Cheryl LaFleur said the commission is not authorized under the National Environmental Policy Act, which prescribes how environmental reviews should be conducted, to carry out the sort of cradle-to-grave analysis that EPA is asking for ([Greenwire](#), Aug. 18).

FERC spokeswoman Tamara Young-Allen said EPA's concerns would be addressed by the commissioners in their ultimate record of decision on the Corpus Christi project. The commissioners typically do not stray far from the EIS in issuing that decision.

Environmentalists have raised objections along the lines of the EPA comments on several major LNG export projects that are in development, and said in part that computer modeling tools allow policymakers enough insight into expected natural gas drilling activity that the effects can reasonably be predicted.

The issues have not yet reached the stage of a court fight, but greens have promised such a legal battle over Dominion Resources Inc.'s proposed Cove Point LNG project in Lusby, Md. ([EnergyWire](#), Oct. 1).

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30. CHEMICALS:

Texas plant where workers died has long history of violations

Sam Pearson, E&E reporter

Published: Tuesday, November 18, 2014

Federal officials held their first meetings with DuPont Co. representatives yesterday as they work to piece together the cause of a chemical leak at the company's La Porte, Texas, plant that killed four workers Saturday.

Seven members of the eight-person U.S. Chemical Safety Board investigative team held a meeting with company and union officials at a conference room at the plant, the CSB said late yesterday, marking the beginning of an inquiry that could take a year or longer.

Investigators began interviewing shift workers at the chemical plant and other possible witnesses, with the assistance of the workers' union, the International Chemical Workers Union Council, the agency said. The CSB said its staff have not been able to enter the area where the chemical leak occurred -- a five-story-high enclosed structure with piping, valves and other equipment -- because DuPont is still securing the site.

"We have asked the company to preserve the status of the process, valve and other equipment settings as close as possible to where they were at the time of the accident to aid in our investigation," CSB investigator Johnnie Banks said in a statement.

The agency said it was too soon to speculate on the cause of the accident, which reports have said could have been the result of a valve failure ([Greenwire](#), Nov. 18).

While it was the most serious safety incident there, this was not the first time the plant drew regulators' attention. The site had drawn the interest of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and U.S. EPA over the years, though not for methyl mercaptan, the chemical the workers are thought to have been exposed to Saturday.

EPA data show the facility has been out of compliance with the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and hazardous waste management requirements for portions of the last five years. The company has paid at least \$117,375 in Clean Water Act penalties during that time for unauthorized discharges, records show. Texas regulators filed an [administrative order](#) against the plant in September over an air quality violation, records show.

The company disclosed in its [risk management plan](#), which was last updated in 2011, that it previously released a hazardous substance, causing an off-site injury, property damage and orders for nearby residents to shelter in place. The company agreed to a \$5,688 [penalty](#) in 2008 for failing to notify the National Response Center of a chemical release it was required to report.

A workplace safety inspection by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in 2007 [found](#) a serious violation of chemical process safety management regulations. DuPont settled the allegation by paying a \$1,800 fine.

In 2008, the Center for American Progress included the DuPont facility on a list of 101 chemical plants it said posed the greatest security threat to the public, based on data from the facilities' risk management plans showing the type and quantities of chemicals used there and the number of people who lived nearby.

The La Porte plant was among four facilities listed as using hydrofluoric acid in concentrations greater than 50 percent, which "together pose toxic gas release dangers to approximately 8 million people," the [report](#) said.

While the group was unable to identify a safer alternative for hydrofluoric acid, it suggested that the plants could reduce the risk of a chemical release by using less concentrated forms of the chemical.

DuPont [reported](#) \$7.5 billion in sales in the third quarter of this year.

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Everything New Orleans

Federal regulator warns reversing pipeline flow to handle new oil, gas could result in spill, website reports

Oil Leak Arkansas

Oil from ExxonMobil's Pegasus pipeline covers a backyard in Mayflower, Ark., on April 1, 2013, a few days after it ruptured. The federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration has advised pipeline owners and operators of risks involved in reversing the flow of oil in pipelines, such as the Pegasus line. (AP Photo/Jeannie Nuss, File)

Mark Schleifstein, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune By **Mark Schleifstein, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune**

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on November 18, 2014 at 1:10 PM, updated November 18, 2014 at 1:12 PM

Even as the U.S. Senate considers a vote on building the controversial **Keystone XL** oil pipeline from Canada to the U.S., the federal agency that regulates pipelines is warning that a new money-saving trend of reversing the flow of oil and natural gas in existing pipelines or changing the product they carry could threaten the pipelines' safety, according to **InsideClimate News**.

Reporter Elizabeth Douglass wrote that a Sept. 12 notice from the **Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration** represents the first time the agency has officially cautioned industry about these potential safety problems. The warning addresses increased practices of restarting, reversing or reworking pipelines to handle Canada tar sands oil, such as would be carried by Keystone, or in other pipelines being developed to handle increased oil and gas supplies in the U.S.

The new advisory was triggered in part by two spills in 2013 that involved reversed pipelines, including ExxonMobil's Pegasus tar sands line in Arkansas.

Among projects that could be affected by the advisory is a proposal to reverse flow of **BP's 632-mile Capline pipeline**, Douglass reported, which now carries crude oil from St. James Parish in Louisiana north to Illinois.

The proposed Keystone pipeline would transport more than 800,000 barrels of crude oil each day that have been extracted from tar sands in Alberta, Canada, to Nebraska, where it would move into other pipelines for transport to the Gulf Coast.

Environmentalists opposing the pipeline say it will result in increased emissions of carbon linked to climate change and could be the source of future spills.



POLITICS | NYT NOW

Senate Defeats Bill on Keystone XL Pipeline in Narrow Vote

By ASHLEY PARKER and CORAL DAVENPORT NOV. 18, 2014

WASHINGTON — Senate Democrats, by a single vote, stopped legislation that would have approved construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, one of the most fractious and expensive battles of the Obama presidency.

The vote represented a victory for the environmental movement, but the fight had taken on larger dimensions as a proxy war between Republicans, who argued that the project was vital for job creation, and President Obama, who had delayed a decision on building it.

Senator Mary L. Landrieu, Democrat of Louisiana, who is facing a runoff election Dec. 6, had pleaded with her colleagues throughout the day to support the pipeline, leading to a rare suspense-filled roll call in the Senate. But she was ultimately rebuffed and fell short by one. The bill was defeated with 59 votes in favor and 41 against, and Ms. Landrieu needing 60 votes to proceed.

The vote was also a reflection of how a once-obscure pipeline blew up into a national political battle between environmentalists and the oil industry. Although the TransCanada company proposed the pipeline in 2005, it generated so little attention that Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton was poised to approve it in 2011 with little fanfare.

But at that point, environmentalists looking to press Mr. Obama to act on climate change issues seized it as a potent symbol, leading to protests outside the White House and millions of dollars from environmentalists

and the oil industry poured into political races on both sides.

The political fallout, though, affected Ms. Landrieu more than the president, at least in the near term. She was able to persuade 14 Democrats to join all 45 Republicans to support the pipeline, but 40 Democrats and Senator Angus King, independent of Maine, combined to stop the legislation.

Republicans vowed to bring back the Keystone bill as soon as they return in January, when they will hold the majority. Speaking on the Senate floor moments after the vote, Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky and the incoming majority leader, said that he would immediately bring up a Keystone bill when the new Senate convenes.

“For so many good reasons, we’ll be back with this after the first of the year,” said Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, a Republican who is poised to replace Ms. Landrieu as head of the Senate Energy Committee. “And I believe that the momentum we’ve gained means we’ll see progress and see this bill passed.”

Speaking after her bill was defeated, Ms. Landrieu — who stood ramrod straight with her hands clasped in front of her, watching over the vote in the center of the Senate floor — talked about fighting to pass the Keystone bill, but she very well could have been speaking of her own political future.

“I came here 18 years ago, fighting to get here, fighting to stay here, and I’m going to fight for the people of my state until the day that I leave — I hope that will not be soon,” Ms. Landrieu said. “There’s only joy in the fight. Where I come from, we just never talk about quitting, and we don’t talk about whining.”

But despite cajoling and browbeating her colleagues during a private lunch — which one attendee described as “civilized but pretty contentious” — Ms. Landrieu, who has so often bulldozed her way to success, was not able to produce that elusive final vote.

At the lunch, Ms. Landrieu made an “impassioned plea” that at

moments verged on tears, according to a Democrat. Ms. Landrieu, according to the Democrat, focused part of her pitch on how the legislation would help her back home, though at one point she argued that Democrats should send the bill to Mr. Obama's desk because it would help him politically by giving him something to veto.

Given the number of Democrats who supported the bill on Tuesday, Republicans may well be able to muster a filibuster-proof 60 votes to pass the pipeline in the next Congress, but they are still likely to fall a few votes short of 67, the number required to override a presidential veto.

Tuesday's vote exposed to public view some of the contours and rifts in the Democratic Party, where many senators feel they have too often bent over backward to accommodate Ms. Landrieu and protect her Senate seat — one of the last remaining Democratic seats in the South. They finally revolted, in what they said was a vote of principle against legislation they believe would harm the environment.

Throughout her Senate career, Ms. Landrieu, a moderate who was known as the oil industry's best friend in the Democratic Party, has clashed with the liberal environmental wing of her party.

She has for years pressed for votes on measures that infuriate them, such as expanding offshore drilling, while voting against measures to tackle climate change.

Those lawmakers took to the floor Tuesday to express their opposition to the Keystone pipeline, even as they acknowledged the importance of those votes to Ms. Landrieu's political fate.

Environmental advocates had spent the week lobbying Democrats to ensure they would oppose Ms. Landrieu's bill.

NextGen Climate, the advocacy group founded by the California billionaire Thomas Steyer, who spent over \$50 million of his own money to back pro-environment Democrats in 2014, also hit supporters with emails asking them to urge senators to vote against the pipeline measure.

"Today the U.S. Senate decided to stand on the right side of history," Mr. Steyer said in a statement after the vote. "This is a legacy-defining

issue where one's position signifies whether they are standing up for or against the next generation on the issue of climate."

The House, which passed the same legislation on Friday, had voted multiple times already to approve the pipeline. But Tuesday was the first time this year that the Senate majority leader, Harry Reid, Democrat of Nevada, had agreed to hold a vote on the bill, which he had feared could hurt the re-election chances of some of his more vulnerable members.

Both Ms. Landrieu and her Republican opponent, Representative Bill Cassidy, were eager to take credit for supporting the Keystone bill back home, where their state's economy is heavily dependent on oil-industry jobs. Speaking on the floor, Republicans sought to cast the legislation as "Congressman Cassidy's Keystone jobs bill," while Democrats described it as Ms. Landrieu's brainchild.

Ms. Landrieu had hoped that forcing a vote on the Senate floor would help her show Louisiana voters that she is still fighting for them in Washington.

Even if the Senate had passed the bill, Mr. Obama was not expected to sign it into law.

But the events of this week suggest that the president may eventually approve the pipeline. White House advisers have repeatedly said that they do not intend to make a final decision until a Nebraska court issues a verdict on the route of the pipeline through that state. That decision is expected to come as soon as January, the same month that a Republican-majority Congress can be expected to send another Keystone bill to the president's desk — one that could be within a few votes of a veto-proof majority.

People familiar with the president's thinking say that in 2015, he might use Keystone as a bargaining chip: He would offer Republicans approval of it in exchange for approval of one of his policies.

A version of this article appears in print on November 19, 2014, on page A1 of the New York edition with the headline: Senate Hands Narrow Defeat to Pipeline Bill.

Gila contract improper, diversion opponent says

John Fleck / Journal Staff Writer



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The staff of the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission signed a \$500,000 engineering contract for work on a proposed Gila River water diversion project without getting approval in a public meeting, according to documents made public in an open meetings lawsuit.

Craig Roepke, a staff member working on the controversial Gila project, signed the contract with Albuquerque engineering firm Bohannon Huston Inc. on May 2, 2012, according to documents provided by the state to attorneys for project opponent Norm Gaume.

The following month, Roepke asked in a public meeting for retroactive approval of the decision, without telling commissioners the contract already had been signed, according to a staff report and minutes of the meeting.

The project would divert water from the Gila for use in southwestern New Mexico farms and cities.

Critics say a diversion, which according to a Bureau of Reclamation analysis could cost up to \$1 billion, is far too costly and environmentally damaging given the relatively small amount of water it would yield for farms and cities.

Supporters say New Mexico cannot afford to let the water pass unused to Arizona.

Gaume, former Interstate Stream Commission director, sued the state in October, alleging a pattern of secrecy surrounding the Gila project that violated the New Mexico Open Meetings Act.

The state's approval of the contract without any public notice reflects a pattern of secrecy in its decision-making over the project, said Santa Fe attorney Brian Egolf, who is representing Gaume.

State staff are legally authorized to approve contracts up to \$50,000, but contracts above that amount require public notice and approval by the commission, Egolf said. The Bohannon Huston agreement is only one of a number of Gila-related contracts approved without public notice or discussion, according to Egolf.

Reached by phone Tuesday, Roepke declined comment. An attorney and agency spokeswoman also did not respond to a request for comment.

Gaume's lawsuit has added turmoil to the already divisive process. The state faces a Dec. 31 deadline to notify the federal government if it wants to proceed with the project and receive \$62 million for the work.

Last Friday, Roepke recommended to the commission that the state proceed with a diversion.

But in response to Gaume's suit, a District Court judge in Santa Fe in October issued a restraining order blocking a decision until the court could sort out the open meeting allegations.

District Judge Raymond Ortiz, who issued the original restraining order, withdrew from the case last week. It has been reassigned to Judge Frank Mathew, with a hearing scheduled for Thursday afternoon.

A hearing of the full Interstate Stream Commission is tentatively scheduled for Monday to make a final decision on Roepke's recommendation, but that hearing remains in limbo pending the outcome of Thursday's hearing on Gaume's suit.



Published on *Center for Effective Government* (<http://www.foreffectivegov.org>)

Blog: The Fine Print

Mapping DuPont's Deadly Chemical Leak

by Amanda Frank, 11/18/2014

On Saturday, Nov. 15, a toxic chemical leak at a DuPont manufacturing plant outside of Houston killed four workers and hospitalized another, serving as another troubling example of the need for stronger chemical safety standards. The chemical involved in the leak, [methyl mercaptan](#), can cause eye and lung irritation and can be fatal at high levels. Numerous other U.S. facilities use and store this chemical, including those featured in a new [interactive map](#) by the Center for Effective Government.

The DuPont Accident

Saturday's incident occurred at a [DuPont plant in La Porte, Texas](#) (outside Houston), which uses methyl mercaptan to manufacture pesticides. The La Porte plant stores as much as [122,000 pounds of methyl mercaptan](#).

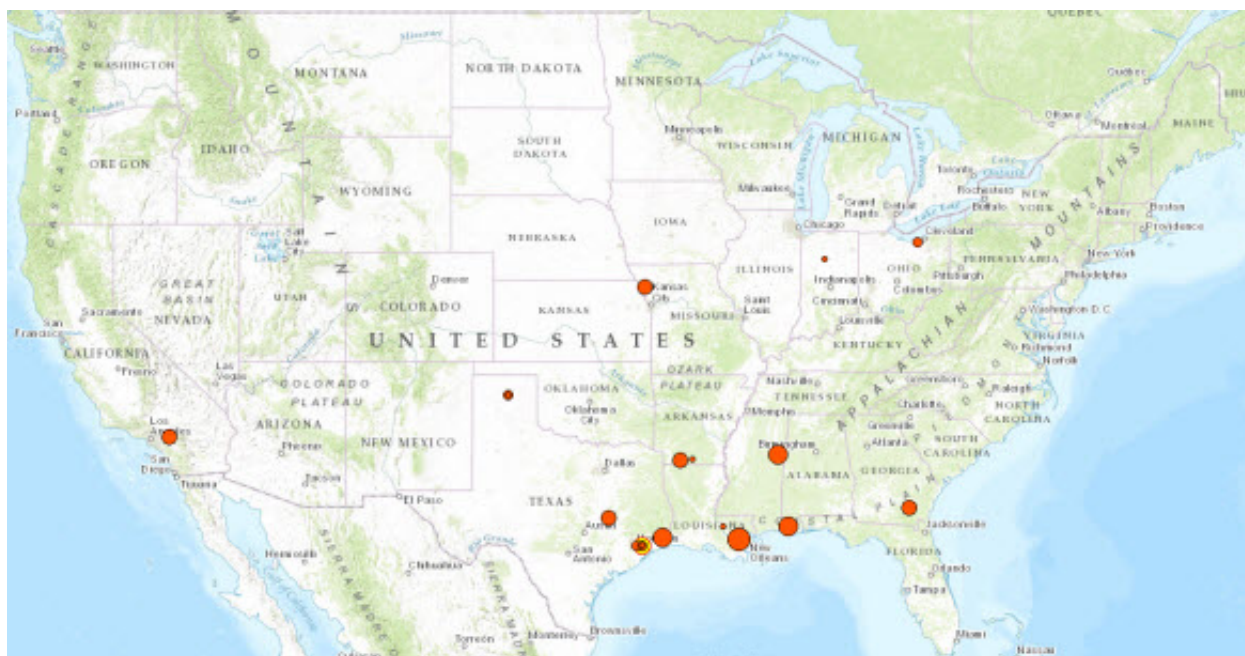
The chemical is also used at other facilities in a number of other processes, from refining jet fuel to plastic production. Methyl mercaptan is stored as a liquid but turns to gas when exposed to oxygen. The gas is colorless but can be readily identified by its rotten eggs smell. You've likely smelled it before, as it's added to natural gas so that people can detect gas leaks in their homes.

In large amounts, however, [methyl mercaptan](#) can be deadly. The gas is heavier than air and spreads close to the ground, displacing oxygen. [High levels of exposure](#) can affect the central nervous system and cause unconsciousness or even death by asphyxiation. The gas is also extremely flammable and produces toxic fumes when burned.

The exact nature of the incident remains unclear, but reports have indicated that employees were responding to a leaking valve. The [Chemical Safety Board](#), an independent federal agency, is currently investigating. The agency does not issue fines but instead reviews chemical accidents and makes suggestions for risk prevention and management. The agency noted that this is the first deadly methyl mercaptan incident they have investigated, and it raises many questions about how plants can prevent future fatalities.

Mapping Chemical Risks

Following the DuPont accident, we mapped eighteen additional chemical facilities across ten states that use methyl mercaptan. Dots of incremental sizes identify the amount of methyl mercaptan stored onsite at these facilities.



[click to open interactive map](#)

While most of these facilities are chemical manufacturers that use methyl mercaptan in their processes, four of the facilities are railroad car service centers that clean train cars that carry hazardous substances. Other facilities include a petroleum refinery in Texas, two hazardous waste treatment centers (one in Ohio and one in Mississippi), and a plant that manages hazardous waste-derived fuels in Mississippi.

Eight of the 18 facilities using methyl mercaptan are in Texas, with four located in the greater Houston area (including DuPont's La Porte plant). However, the plant storing the most methyl mercaptan is a Union Carbide chemical manufacturing plant in St. Charles, Louisiana, which stores up to 7.75 *million* pounds of the substance.

Additional facilities in the U.S. may also use methyl mercaptan but are not required to report it to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [Risk Management Program \(RMP\)](#) because they fall below the 10,000-pound reporting threshold.

This map serves as an important tool for communities and their leaders to assess potential risks from an accident involving the release of methyl mercaptan. Users can locate facilities using this hazardous chemical and discover how many students go to school within these facilities' danger zones. The map also provides links to additional information so users can follow up with facilities and insist they reduce risks by using the safest processes possible.

Methyl Mercaptan Not the Only Risky Chemical in La Porte

DuPont's La Porte plant reports to EPA's Risk Management Program (RMP). Nearly 13,000 other facilities report to RMP because they use or store large amounts of certain hazardous substances. Methyl mercaptan is just one of many chemicals regulated by RMP because of its high toxicity.

Despite the large amount of methyl mercaptan onsite at the La Porte plant, the chemical of most concern there is hydrofluoric acid. The plant holds enough of this toxic chemical that a leak could affect communities 25 miles away. This danger zone is home to 1.6 million residents and 580 schools (349,660 students). For more information on schools in chemical danger zones, visit our [Kids in Danger Zones](#) resources page.

Improving Chemical Safety

DuPont's tragedy happened less than a month after EPA closed its comment period on improving chemical safety. Included in this "[Request for Information](#)" were many questions surrounding RMP facilities. They received around 100,000 comments from industry representatives, public interest groups, and the general public. The agency is currently reviewing these submissions and will likely announce any proposed rulemaking next spring.

One promising way to prevent chemical accidents is to require facilities to switch to safer chemical alternatives and technologies whenever feasible. Switching to less volatile or toxic chemicals and limiting the amount of chemicals stored on site reduces facilities' danger zones, thus protecting workers and communities.

However, some industry representatives are opposed to safer alternative requirements and insist that they already have sufficient safety requirements in place. In response to our *Kids in Danger Zones* [report](#) in late September, the American Chemical Council released a [statement](#) highlighting their Responsible Care® program, which includes company-level policies for process safety, including managing potential risks and training employees to respond to them. DuPont, in fact, takes part in this program. However, while it is important for facilities to respond appropriately to accidents, more emphasis is needed on *preventing* accidents in the first place – and the most effective approach is to require safer alternatives.

Unfortunately, accidents occur regularly at chemical plants. Some of these accidents cost lives or injure workers and community members. To effectively reduce these risks, EPA must move quickly to require that all RMP facilities use the safest technologies and chemicals available.

Source URL: <http://www.foreffectivegov.org/blog/mapping-dupont-deadly-chemical-leak>



Energy and Environment Reporting for Texas

Texas Grid Operator Says Clean Energy Plan Could Raise Bills and Lead to Blackouts

NOVEMBER 18, 2014 | 11:37 AM

BY MOSE BUCHELE



MOSE BUCHELE/STATEIMPACT TEXAS

The agency in charge of running the state's energy grid says the EPA's plan to reduce carbon emissions could put strain on the grid and raise rates for consumers.

The **clean energy plan** put forth by the Environmental Protection Agency aims to combat climate change by reducing the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by power plants. But it may come at a price, according to **a report released Monday** by the **Electric Reliability Council of Texas**, the group that manages much of Texas electric grid.

The report says electricity bills could rise as much as 20 percent because of the carbon reduction goals, adding that the goals could also endanger electric reliability. Part of that is due to the way the plan would change Texas' energy mix.

"What we found is that the likely impact of the clean power plan is going to be the retirement of a significant portion of the coal-fired capacity in ERCOT," says ERCOT Director of System Planning Warren Lasher.

The goal of the EPA's clean energy plan is to reduce Texas carbon emissions by 30 percent by 2030.

Scientists say that reducing carbon emissions provides the best chance at averting potentially catastrophic climate change.

But the shift away from coal to less carbon-focused fuels would also require the development of new infrastructure to support solar, wind and natural gas plants. Lasher says that would mean less reliability of electric supply, and higher bills. He says bills could jump at much as 20 percent by 2020, if Texas adopts a carbon allowance system that taxes emissions.

"A lot of those increases are associated with the costs of carbon allowances in order to

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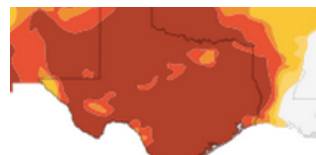
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GREAT SAVINGS ON TONY LAMA BOOTS

Residents talk lake's future in Calhoun County



By Sara Sneath (/profiles/staff/ssneath/55/)

Nov. 18, 2014 at 10:54 p.m.

Updated Nov. 19, 2014 at 12:11 a.m.



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Calhoun County residents were given the opportunity to voice their say in how Green Lake will be used at public meetings held Monday and Tuesday nights.

The county purchased the 6,400-acre Green Lake property with two grants totaling \$3.5 million from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in December 2012. The grants stipulate the property must be used for wildlife conservation purposes, but the county hopes to develop recreational activities on the land alongside conservation goals.



Fishing, boating and paddling, picnicking, hiking and bird-watching were among the most popular uses, according to community survey results. Environmental and historical educational opportunities were also a voiced by the community Tuesday night.

Norma Friedrich drove three and a half hours to attend the Tuesday night meeting. Friedrich lived on the Green Lake property for 17 years before it was purchased by the county. Friedrich's husband was the private warden for the land during that time.

The land is undeveloped and wild with lots of mosquitoes and a few too many alligators, she said. Friedrich, who now lives in Harlingen, spoke to the audience of about 40 people about the possibility of making the lake a destination for bird-watchers.

"You're going to have visitors," she said. "You're going to make money."

The Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival brings in about \$6 million, she said. Many of the bird species in the valley are also in Calhoun County.

The next step in the Green Lake Renewal Project will be going back to the drawing board to figure out how some of the communities wants can be applied on the land, said Justin Bates, the community planner for the project. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and other wildlife experts are helping to make sure

wildlife conservation will coexist with the recreational projects developed, such as a pavilion, camping sites or boat ramp.


"The big question is where funding would come from," said Bates, who works for the National Parks Service's Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance program.


The majority of the 384 people who participated in the community survey said they were willing to pay \$5 for day use for the park and \$50 for an annual pass. But most respondents said they'd like to see grants pay for park upkeep.

But Petra Hockey, a bird-watcher who lives in Port O'Connor, said no matter how much damage is minimized during the development process, the birds that use Green Lake will lose some habitat.

"I'm excited but also concerned. Anything we do out there is going to disturb birds," she said. "It has to be done very judiciously."

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GREAT SAVINGS ON TONY LAMA BOOTS

System cleaning byproducts found in Calhoun County water



By Sara Sneath (/profiles/staff/ssneath/55/)

Nov. 14, 2014 at 10:39 p.m.

Updated Nov. 15, 2014 at 1:16 a.m.

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The state environmental agency found an excess of cleaning byproducts in Port O'Connor and Port Lavaca drinking water supplied by Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority.

The state environmental agency's water sample was taken shortly after a one-month period when the river authority alternated its disinfection method, according to a letter to GBRA customers. During this one-month period, the amount of disinfection byproducts was elevated.



To protect public health, the Environmental Protection Agency stipulates that the level of disinfection byproducts - called trihalomethanes - cannot exceed 80 parts per billion in public drinking water distribution systems. The agency estimates drinking two liters of water containing 100 parts per billion of the cleaning byproducts every day for 70 years could result in three additional cases of cancer for every 10,000 people.

Water samples taken by the state environmental agency during the third quarter found levels of trihalomethanes at 114 parts per billion and 122 parts per billion, according to a letter from Port O'Connor Improvement District to residents.

Cities that use river water as a drinking water source face naturally occurring film buildup in their pipes. The film is known to harbor bacteria and pathogens. To prevent film buildup, the river authority alternates its disinfection method during a 30-day period in late summer, according to the river authority letter.

During this period, there is a higher level of disinfection byproducts caused by chlorine's reaction with organic matter in the water during the disinfection process.


The Texas Commission of Environmental Quality took a water sample shortly after the 30-day period when elevated levels of disinfection byproducts were present, according the river authority letter.


The river authority is working with the state environmental agency to ensure future water sampling is more representative of the everyday levels of disinfection byproducts found in Port Lavaca and Port O'Connor drinking water. The agency is also working to prevent disinfection byproducts during the water treatment, according to the authority's letter.


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White House clears EPA rewrite of hazardous waste rule

By Timothy Cama - 11/18/14 01:43 PM EST

The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has approved a regulation that seeks to strengthen federal standards for recycling hazardous waste.

The rule to change the definition of solid waste under the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) standards would partially roll back a 2008 rule from the final months of the Bush administration.

The 2008 rule loosened federal authority over some hazardous waste from industries like mining, agriculture and industrial operations, in what the EPA said was an effort to increase the recycling of those substances.

The Obama administration quickly started the process of changing the 2008 rule and proposed new restrictions in 2011 under pressure from environmentalists who said it puts an unequal burden on low-income and minority communities near waste sites.

Representatives from industries like oil and chemical manufacturing have pushed back against the agency's revisions.

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OMB's review is the final step before the EPA can publicize the final rule.

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Farmington officials say city power plants not violating Clean Water Act

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PUBLISHED: Tuesday, November 18, 2014 at 9:28 am

FARMINGTON — Environmental Protection Agency officials have not yet said whether two Farmington power plants are violating federal laws. Although the plants are listed on an agency database as not being in compliance, city officials say the listings are wrong.

"We're convinced, beyond the shadow of a doubt, it's an error on the EPA's database," said Michael Sims, Farmington Electric Utility System director.

The utility company operates two power plants — Animas and Bluffview — that on Friday were listed on the EPA's Enforcement and Compliance History Online database as violating the Clean Water Act.

The Clean Water Act regulates pollution discharge into natural water bodies. It was established in the 1970s along with two other acts that regulate ground and air pollution, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and the Clean Air Act.

The Animas plant has been in violation of the Clean Water Act since July 2011, according to information taken from the database on Monday. The database tracks only the three previous years of inspections, from 2011 to 2014.

But the database provides conflicting information. Two other pages list the Bluffview plant with no violations of the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act or Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and a third page lists the Animas plant with no violations of those acts either.

EPA officials are examining the issue, agency spokeswoman

Western Refining's Bloomfield facility was also listed on the database as violating the Clean Air Act since October 2011 and 12 violations of the Clean Air Act since January 2012. But the violations, as of Monday, are not listed.

Efforts to reach EPA officials for comment late Monday were unsuccessful.

Aaron Dailey, an environmental scientist for the city's electric company, said he sent the EPA error reports about the listings. He received a response — possibly an automated one — from the EPA on Monday.

"It will take some time," he said of removing the power plants from the database listing.

He said he plans to check the website twice a year to make sure the electric company's not listed as violating federal environmental laws, he said.

Dan Schwartz covers government for The Daily Times. He can be reached at 505-564-4606 and dschwartz@daily-times.com. Follow him @Dan-J-Schwartz on Twitter.

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ERCOT wants ‘safety valve’ in EPA plan

Posted Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2014

Top Texas officials have already decried the Environmental Protection Agency’s proposed Clean Power Plan rules aimed at reducing carbon dioxide emissions from power plants, so it’s no surprise that the state’s main power grid operator has chimed in.

A report Monday from the Electric Reliability Council of Texas showed a bunch of alarming negatives, including a prediction that the plan would cause power costs for consumers to increase 20 percent or more by 2020.

But ERCOT isn’t a watchdog over how much electricity costs — its job is to make sure power is available when Texans want it.

And along that line, the agency also backed a key recommendation for making the Clean Power Plan work better if the EPA, as expected, makes its rules final.

The concern about power reliability is that coal-fired power plants, which Texas has in abundance, will be pushed out of business faster than expected, leaving the electrical grid short-supplied during periods of peak demand.

“There is a natural pace of change in grid resources due to advancing cost-effective technologies and changing market conditions,” the ERCOT report says. “The pace can be accelerated, but there is a limit to how fast this change can occur within acceptable reliability constraints.”

A national group of power grid operators has said there should be a “reliability safety valve process” in carbon dioxide emission reduction standards.

The group also recommends allowing states to consider electric grid reliability as they draw up implementation plans to meet EPA-required carbon dioxide emissions goals.

“These proposals could help mitigate the potential reliability impacts of the Clean Power Plan,” ERCOT said.

Texas officials complain that, under EPA numbers, the state would be responsible for up to 25 percent of the nation’s total emissions reductions. That’s partly because Texas is by far the leader in carbon dioxide emissions.

Much as reductions might be needed, the state still can’t give up electric reliability. The EPA should consider the “safety valve” request.

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